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ABSTRACT

The professional schools within institutions of higher education are becoming consumers of the counseling psychologist's expertise. The psychologist can offer skills training to enhance the professional performance of students. A knowledge of students' developmental processes can be very useful. The counselor's role may include consulting, research, and publishing in professional journals as well as diagnosis and assessment of students. Interventions may include training programs for students who want to improve their skills with patients or clients. Working in a professional college can provide rich opportunities to psychologists through interdisciplinary experiences. (JAC)

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Applications of Counseling Psychology within the Professional School Setting

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In addition to organizations and medical settings which have become increasingly responsive to the psychologist's expertise, the professional schools within institutions of higher education are developing as knowledgeable consumers of the field. Furthermore, since the counseling psychologist comes from a tradition which values educative prevention and developmental intervention, working with students who are to become professionals in organizational and medical settings has a special and fundamental appeal.

An increasing amount of literature would suggest that professional schools across the country--Colleges of Law, Medicine, Business, and Nursing, to name a few--are finding that counseling psychologists can make important contributions to the professional training of their students. First, we offer a repetoire of skills which can be readily trained and which can greatly enhance the professional's performance in his or her applied setting. All of the basic interpersonal and interviewing skills, for example, can be adapted to the specific needs of a variety of human services settings, and can contribute significantly to the quality of care and services which are offered (Kagan, 1979; Stachnik, 1980; Bartnick and O'Brien, 1980). Similarly (and as noted by Dr. Davis), colleges of Business Administration are finding that human relations training has direct relevance to job satisfaction, productivity, conflict resolution, and managerial relationships, and consequently deserves inclusion in the professional training of their students (Sodler, 1960).

In addition to the skills training which can enhance the professional performance of their students, a second reason that professional

colleges look to applied psychology is that they have become much more attuned to the academic and developmental needs of their students and are finding that a knowledge of the developmental processes of students can be very useful. This knowledge can include an awareness of the psychological nature of their students, the stresses imposed by their academic environments, and the issues which accompany the emergence of their professional identity (May, 1980; May and Stott, 1981; Kaplan and Pac, 1977).

The professional college often approaches counseling psychology through an external consultant, or from an internal focus by employing its own psychologist. For many schools, the thrust is to adapt counseling psychology skills into the professional training program, either formally through the curriculum or more tangentially through special workshops or adjunctive offerings. In some schools the direction is more toward providing counseling and psychological services tailored specifically to their own students: support groups, interpersonal groups which are issue oriented, or more academically-focused anxiety and stress management programs.

While there are a variety of approaches to be summarized and reported, one difficulty is that psychologists who work with professional schools often publish in the literature of their clients (that is, in the professional journals related to the specific professional school with whom they are working). Journals such as the Journal of Medical Education, the Journal of Legal Education, the Journal of Orthodontic Education, Dimensions in Health Service, the New England Journal of Medicine, and the Personnel Journal are beginning to feature a moderate

number of articles regarding the adaptation and use of psychological skills within their applied settings; the difficulty being that unless the psychologist is already familiar with the industrial personnel literature, for example, or has the opportunity to peruse it regularly, information about these innovative programs being implemented in business colleges is simply harder to find.

The literature in our own professional journals (The American Psychologist, The Counseling Psychologist, the Journal of Counseling Psychology, and the Journal of College Student Personnel, for example) is more scant, although adequate enough to indicate that counseling psychologists are reporting successful endeavors in working with professional schools on campus. An overview of this literature includes Blair and Fretz, who have reported a study comparing approaches for teaching interpersonal skills training to premedical students (1980); Lamb (1981) who reports on expanding the training of family practice physician residents by arranging a placement rotation for them in a college counseling center; Andberg, Follett, and Hendel (1981) who report a study of men and women in veterinary medicine, comparing their educational experiences, expectations and conflicts, and discuss the implications of their findings in terms of the differential needs for support services; and Bartnick and O'Brien (1980), who describe a model developed for workshop training in basic counseling and empathic listening skills for use in health care settings and appropriate for training with these students. While this is not an exhaustive list, it includes a sampling of the types of approaches being used, and actually represents over 50 per cent of the work published in these

journals in the past three years.

Proportionally speaking, there appears to be more literature suggesting why we could and should be working with various professional schools than there are available models or researched efforts for doing so. Thus, the counseling psychologist interested in exploring such possibilities will typically need to consider all phases of the process, beginning with his or her introduction and entry into the system.

For purposes of illustration, I have chosen to outline the phases used in working with professional schools at the University of Iowa, and to speak from the external consultant perspective. The primary purpose here would be to highlight the phases as ones which are useful to a counseling psychologist in approaching or working with non-traditional settings, and to include special considerations which have been useful in working with the various disciplines. Basically these phases are simply the core ingredients of most consultation or program development approaches: systems entry; diagnosis and assessment, intervention, and evaulation/research.

Many of the first phase or systems entry considerations will be determined by whether the professional school has sought out the psychologist, or the psychologist is seeking out the professional school; in other words, where is the original investemnt. Either situation carries its own advantages and disadvantages. Whether an individual student, a faculty member, or a student organization is the initial contact, however, a crucial consideration here is that the support of an academic person in a key (preferably administrative) role must be

gained early on. Conversely, if the key administrator is the contact, some form of popular support is usually needed as well, depending on the nature and scope of the project. The cautionary note is that many of the norms for the working relationship are laid during this time, thus the tone set in this stage has long lasting ramifications.

Diagnosis and assessment considerations range from what the college wants to what it already has. Guidelines from the literature on mental health and organizational consultation are important in this phase: clarifying the client's hopes and expectations, understanding any hidden agendas, and clarifying goals. Beyond the general questions, assessment questions which have been most consistently useful here include:

1) what type of modality would be most appropriate? (e.g. a skill based group, a support group, or simply curriculum consultation).
2) what are they already doing in this area? (e.g. in considering interpersonal skills training, what courses already include an interpersonal skills orientation, or could provide experiences for practice and application).
3) what are the developmental issues particular to the students enrolled in this professional college?
4) what are the stresses particular to the students enrolled in this professional school?
5) how do these students best learn? and/or what are the features of how this discipline approaches education and training?

Some pragmatic suggestions for this phase are to consider administering a needs assessment questionnaire, determining what resources are available from the college (monetary, equipment, human), and wherever possible, including at least one student in both the assessment and planning process.

The intervention itself may be a treatment, training, or consultation approach, depending on the needs and goals established in the diagnosis and assessment phase. In planning the intervention, some decisions that must be made are whether the experience (if it includes service delivery) will be a part of an existing course, or a special offering; whether attendance is required; and whether students will be graded on their performance. The goals of the program will help determine the scope and target population. The questions are who and how many people are needed or wanted as participants, and whether to try implementing on a one-shot or on-going bases.

Interventions which involve training may be oriented toward specific issues such as helping orthodontists improve patient cooperation, or lawyers build client rapport, even though the basis of the training might be a generic interpersonal skills package. A job analysis of exactly what these students are doing or will be expected to do in their professional roles can be extremely helpful, both in generating ideas for issue oriented programs as well as in providing information necessary in helping them see the relevance and application of the skills.

Considerations for evaluation and research will depend, of course, in large part on the purposes and goals of the planned intervention, and should be designed along with the intervention. Choosing some method for measuring treatment or program effectiveness is the most typical and straightforward of the evaluation strategies. For consultative types of interventions, it is important to solicit feedback, at the very least, and desirable to have planned procedures for a more formal evaluation of the services provided. Both students and

administrators appear in many cases to be quite receptive to participating or sponsoring research or evaluation procedures; administrators because it may provide them with valuable accountability information, and students, who generally enjoy the opportunity to express their needs and opinions.

Evaluation and research may also be the basis of the intervention itself, as in needs assessment research, or investigative questioning along the lines of student expectations, conflicts, or dropout patterns. The possibilities for making significant contributions to the professional school setting are countless. From any focus, the evaluation and research phase is a crucial aspect of working with professional schools. This is partly true just from the aspect of professional responsibility, and the need to carry through with follow-up procedures in order to evaluate the impact of the services (Hurst, 1977). It is also crucial because the evaluation or research of a project makes it more likely to appear in the literature, and thus contribute to what is now a very small pool of resources and expertise.

Finally, after making observations that counseling psychologists are working more and more with professional schools on college campuses, and considering guidelines for approaching and working within these settings, the question remains: why do it? Our philosophical altruism might suggest that because we have much to offer, we therefore should do it. Leaders within the field are emphasizing the broad-based nature of the discipline (Ivey, 1979), the potential for beneficial interface with other professions (Kagan, 1979), and our basic responsibility to

disseminate skills in a purposeful and responsible manner (Hurst, 1977). One answer to why, then, might be because it is congruent with many of our philosophical and stated professional goals.

More pragmatically, working with a professional college from either the internal or external point of view can provide rich opportunities that come with interdisciplinary experiences. Regardless of the proposed intention, for example, one product of this cross-professional colleaguality is an increased awareness of how the two disciplines interact: lawyers learn more about the psychological aspects of the law, and psychologists learn more about the legal aspects of psychology. Thus there are opportunities for professional growth and development at a personal level, as well as opportunities for a broader impact across other professions or disciplines.

Similarly, the benefits could be argued from a training point of view. Psychology students can benefit greatly from exposure to other professions as well as obtain "hands on" experience in areas of consultation, program development, or research and evaluation. Ultimately of course, the question must be answered at the level of personal or agency interest. Hopefully, however, this presentation will have heightened an awareness for the possibilities of doing so.

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